

**Respectfully submitted to the Government Administration and Elections Committee,
as Testimony before its Public Hearing Wednesday, February 22, at 10 a.m.**

Senator Flexer and Representative Blumenthal, Co-Chairs

Senator Slap and Representative Morin-Bello, Vice Chairs

Senator Sampson and Representative Mastrofrancesco, Ranking Members

Distinguished Members

Support for

[S.J. No. 29](#) – Resolution Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting

[S.B. No. 1064](#) – An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting

[H.J. No. 1](#) – Resolution Approving a State Constitutional Amendment to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting

[H.B. No. 5004](#) – An Act Implementing Early Voting

[H.B. No. 6693](#) – An Act Concerning Absentee Voting

Opposition to [S.B. No. 713](#) – An Act Concerning the Disclosure of Absentee Ballot Applications

My name is **Cathleen Donnelly**, and I am a voter in Stamford, Connecticut. I am writing in support of legislation to implement **early voting in Connecticut**, including funding to support comprehensive, easy access for voters in every part of the state.

Over a business career of more than 45 years, professional and family commitments had the potential to impede my ability to exercise my fundamental right (and responsibility) as a U.S. citizen and a Connecticut resident – that is, to vote in support of the candidates, laws and causes I believe in.

Fortunately, I had the flexibility, wherewithal, and commitment to obtain and cast my ballot; I have voted in almost every election in which I was eligible to do so.

Others, including those who commute long distances (even out of state) to their jobs, work less flexible schedules, care for ill or disabled family members, or suffer from disability or illness themselves, need the same flexibility.

Our fellow citizens have spoken. In November, 60% of voters voted to change our State Constitution to allow for early voting. I support:

- At least two weeks of early voting, including early morning, evenings, and multiple weekends. (Nationwide, the average number of days for early voting is 23.)
- Early voting/absentee ballot provisions that apply to all elections – general, primary, special, municipal, and referendums.
- Convenient voting locations, accessible by public transportation, for the elderly, working families, and disabled populations.
- Fair access in all Connecticut towns, including voting locations/polling places based on the number of age-eligible voters.

- Fast action, including implementation of early voting in 2023, to prepare for the 2024 election.
- Allowing same-day registration during the early voting period.
- No-excuse Absentee Voting. More than 650,000 Connecticut voters voted by absentee ballot in the 2020 Connecticut General Election, leading to a record-breaking 80% voter turnout, with less than one percent rejected – the lowest in recent history.

In addition, I support a requirement that the state allocate funds to municipalities so they can implement early voting – for example, to staff polling places, reach out/educate voters, and purchase computers/tablets to update election procedures.

These proposed changes recognize the daily challenges today's citizens – workers, parents, caregivers, and others – face on Election Day, and provide them an expanded, and long overdue, opportunity to make their voices heard.

Connecticut voters want choice, and we should take these critical steps to expand voter access. Our state is a leader in many respects – we are among the highest ranked for health care access, worker productivity, and education – but we lag when it comes to voter access. We are 1 of only 4 states that do not offer early voting (the others are Alabama, Mississippi, and New Hampshire), and 1 of 15 that require a specific excuse for absentee voting.

Today's events, from the attack on voting rights in our own country, to Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, to Chinese oppression of dissidents, powerfully demonstrate that democracy and the free expression of ideas are under siege. Connecticut must stand against this and strike a blow in favor of expanding voting rights.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Cathleen Donnelly
Stamford, Connecticut
February 22, 2023